DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 041 UD 033 441

AUTHOR	Ford, Barbara E.
TITLE	Developing and Using Black Cultural Knowledge: Challenges and Opportunities in Teacher Development.
PUB DATE	1999-04-00
NOTE	13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Black Culture; *Black Students; *Cultural Awareness; Culturally Relevant Education; Diversity (Student); Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Knowledge Base for Teaching; Multicultural Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS	*Teacher Knowledge

ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' multicultural knowledge and multicultural professional development; teachers' cultural knowledge and/or professional development specific to children of African descent; professional development that teachers have had which increased their effectiveness in teaching children of African descent; and whether teachers' multicultural knowledge affected their performance/effectiveness in the classroom. The study used a survey, interviews/focus groups with a subset of surveyed teachers, and classroom observations of this subset. Of the 81 participating teachers from five schools, 28 percent were Black, 10 percent were Hispanic, 2.5 percent were Filipino, 1 percent were American Indian, and 33 percent were White. Data analysis indicated that only half of the teachers acquired their knowledge about the education of African American students at the colleges they attended. Only 16 percent indicated having received multicultural education at their college. Most teachers received their knowledge through district inservice, which was generally to get additional state teaching certification. Teachers cited lived experiences before teaching more often than education as contributing to their black cultural knowledge base. Teachers indicated a desire for future professional development related to their African American students. (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 441 041

Developing and Using Black Cultural Knowledge: Challenges and Opportunities in Teacher Development

Barbara E. Ford

San Francisco State University

Paper Presented at the 1999 Annual Meeting

American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UD033441

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Barbara E. Ford

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Developing and Using Black Cultural Knowledge: Challenges and Opportunities in Teacher Development

Barbara E. Ford

San Francisco State University

The development of teachers who can meet the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students has been a focus for school districts as well as teacher education. The core knowledge needed to meet these needs has been neither clearly defined nor articulated and although included in NCATE standards for years, in various teaching standards, and in California included as essential in certain credential and certificate programs, the depth and breadth of this knowledge is somewhat nebulous and at best tends to skim the surface. In the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP* ,1997) teachers are expected to: engage and support all students in learning, create and maintain effective environments, understand and organize subject matter, plan instructional experiences, assess student learning, and develop as a professional educator. Implicit in these standards is meeting the diverse learning and developmental needs of all children while they themselves are developing as a professional educator.

Although in some facets the gap between White and Black students has narrowed Black students continue to lag academically (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998, 1996). Irvine (1990) indicates that strategies for improving the school achievement of Black students should involve interventions directed at: decreasing the cultural discontinuity by attending to students' learning styles, their values, language, and history as well as the many resources in the home and community; increasing teacher expectations by effective instruction in schools administered by effective school leaders... and helping parents and

relatives to assist and reinforce school learning. However, in order for teacher education to educate teachers so that the educational lives of Black children improves and is equitable Hilliard (1997) suggests that teachers and teacher trainers take a proactive stance to reverse years of miseducation. He describes this process as a purposeful transformation. There are several steps to this process and these cannot be done in a one shot course, workshop, or a staff development session.

In looking at teachers and their practice Ladson-Billings (1994) found that teachers who use assimilationist teaching practices are not successful with their Black students whereas those who use culturally relevant practices can be and are successful with those students. Shaw (1996) suggests that teachers use instructional pluralism in order to meet the needs of their diverse students and that requires teachers to have a willingness to embrace variability, together with a frame of mind that is creative and logical. However, Hilliard (1997) indicates that teachers in general and especially those who intend to work with students of African descent must have some proficiency in cultural knowledge about African and other people. This has been established by Jacqueline Jordan Irvine (1990) who in describing her "Process Model of Black Student Achievement" names two major factors that contribute to unequal treatment of Black students in school: prejudicial attitudes and lack of appropriate training and suggests that neither is a genetic predisposition and both are alterable and modifiable through in-service staff development and preservice teacher education programs. Brown (1994) developed a paradigm for preparing teachers and implemented with nonminority preservice teachers who began to acquire the knowledge and understanding of critical aspects of African/African American history and culture and found that these teachers were better prepared to teach.

Teachers regardless of experience are involved in many professional development opportunities each year. This is important because as Cook (1997) explains, educators

must pay attention to the results of professional development on job performance, organizational effectiveness, and the success of all students. It is also significant because educational reforms require teachers not only to update their skills and information but totally transform their role as teacher (Darling-Hammond, 1990). In California, teachers are being evaluated by their performance on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. Complicating the process are the increasing number of new teachers, many of whom are not credentialed, that work in schools that serve majority Black and Latino students in California and must engage in both staff development and credential coursework simultaneously. There have been an increasing amount of staff development opportunities that seek to improve the teaching of diverse students and in particular children of African descent, however many are not part of the school site's professional development plan leading to uneven participation and implementation within schools and districts. This then opens several areas for inquiry and the specific questions for this study.

This purpose of this study was to find out:

1. What multicultural knowledge and multicultural professional development teachers have had?
2. What cultural knowledge and/or professional development, if any, teachers have had specific to children of African descent?
3. What other, if any, professional development teachers have had that increased their effectiveness of teaching children of African descent?
4. Whether teacher's cultural knowledge affects their performance /effectiveness in the classroom?

Methods

This study used a survey, interview/focus group of a subset of surveyed teachers and classroom observations of this subset. Eighty-one teachers from five schools in three Bay Area School Districts were surveyed. Of the eighty five: 28 % were Black, 10 % Latino, 4% Asian, 2.5% Filipino, 1% American Indian, and 33 % White. The mean years of teaching were 10 and ranged from two months to 40 years. The ethnic breakdown of students in participating schools from each district are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Student Demographics of Sampled Schools

District/Ethnicity	% students in schools District A	% students in schools District B	% students in schools District C
Black	39	57	52
Latino	16	31	39
Native American	2	0	
Asian	30	9	3
Pacific Islander	2	2	5
Filipino	8	*	
White	3	*	2

Source: ED-Data, Educational Data Partnership, 1998; *<1%

The survey protocol used had items that required yes and no responses and/or open-ended responses. The survey was given as part of a scheduled staff meeting. Frequencies were calculated as well as cross-tabulated on specific variables. Qualitative responses were analyzed for trends, categorized, and where appropriate frequencies tabulated.

Twelve teachers were interviewed and three others responded to the interview protocol as a focus group. The interview protocol had seven items and common themes/trends were found, along with cases developed for each teacher. These teachers were then visited and observed in their classroom. An observation protocol was used that

focused the observation to culturally relevant teaching practices (Ladson-Billings, 1985). These observations are included in the development of the twelve case studies and were used to contextualize and validate teacher reports.

Results

Preliminary findings are reported in this paper and address the four research questions. Table 2 shows survey responses of teachers' professional multicultural education experiences. Most teachers received their knowledge and development through district inservice and most of that was to get additional state teaching certification for Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) .

Table 2: Multicultural Education/Professional Development

Experience	%
University course	16.2
District inservice	43.3
Other	14.9
Many/ mixed (university courses, district, lived experiences)	12.2
Lived Experience	4.1
none	12.2

Table 3: Professional Development Experiences

Experiences	% yes
Preservice	56.3
Knowledge of history and culture	70.9
Professional development on education of children of African descent	64.2
Influenced their teaching	84.7

Table 3 shows the knowledge and experiences teachers reported as related specifically to Black cultural knowledge and teaching children of African descent. Included in the 84.7 percent (Table 2) of teachers who responded were teachers who did not have the cultural knowledge of their children of African descent and felt their teaching may be negatively impacted.

When interviewed, teachers cited their lived experiences more often than courses or preservice education as contributing to their Black cultural knowledge base before they began teaching. Only one third of the interviewed teachers had been involved in professional development specifically designed to increase their Black cultural knowledge and/or meeting the needs of students of African descent.

Fifty six percent of teachers surveyed indicated they had had other professional development that has helped them be more effective with their children of African descent, although most teachers were unable to describe how they measure their effectiveness. Interviewed teachers supported these findings. Other professional development named included: Efficacy training, subject matter professional development, behavior

management. They were able to name professional development that they felt made them more effective but were not able to cite specific ways they could measure this effectiveness. Several interviewed teachers were able to describe some changes in behaviors of students including: more engaged, less discipline problems, better self concept. Most teachers did not identify changes in academic achievement as an outcome.

When observed teachers who had participated in specific and organized multiple session staff development programs which were geared specifically to teachers of students of African descent and increasing student achievement: SEP (Standard English Proficiency) Program, IRISE (Individual Responsibilities for Scholastic Excellence) Program, and CACSEA (Center for Applied Cultural Studies and Educational Achievement) Institute had more evidence of culturally relevant teaching practices in their classrooms. Teachers named these staff developments as contributing to their increased effectiveness and their developing their Black cultural knowledge and better meeting the needs of their students—especially those of African descent—but not exclusively.

Teachers also indicated their desires for future professional development related to better meeting the needs of their children of African descent (Table 4) and their students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Table 5). Communication in both Tables 4 and 5 meant communicating better with their students and/or the families of those students.

Table 4: Desired Professional Development to Meet Needs of Black Children

Professional Development	Responses (%)
History	7
Culture	14
Literature/Reading	5
Language	4
Communications	7
Behavior/Discipline	5
Teaching Strategies	16
Other	42

*Responses rounded to nearest percent

Table 5: Desired Professional Development to Meet Needs of Diverse Students

Professional Development	Responses(%)
History	31
Culture	8
Literature/Reading	12
Language	8
Communications	4
Behavior/Discipline	4
Teaching Strategies	35
Other	0

*Responses rounded to nearest percent

Implications

Most teachers would like to become more effective especially when their students are not performing well. Teachers of culturally diverse students need and want to have cultural knowledge of the students they are teaching and teacher educators, including staff developers, need to also have this knowledge.

The preliminary findings in this study revealed that there are several challenges and opportunities that teacher educators and institutions that provide teacher education and/or teacher/educator professional development. First, only half teachers in this study acquired their knowledge about the education of students of African descent at the colleges or universities that they had attended. However, only 16 percent indicated that they received multicultural education at the university. This tends to indicate a void in the preparation of these teachers that teacher education should attend to. If teacher educators and staff/professional developers are to provide cultural knowledge and experiences than they themselves should have this knowledge and experience. It also suggests that schools and school districts may need to pay particular attention to the deliberate planning of staff development that increases teacher/educator knowledge of the diverse children they serve, Black history and culture and teaching students of African descent. The challenges and opportunities for schools and school districts are not only to provide this development but to assure that this is not in conflict with other staff/professional development efforts especially with the increasing numbers of uncredentialed teachers who are now in many schools and school districts that serve children of African descent. Further inquiry through classroom observation is warranted to find the extent this development has on classroom practice and student outcomes. There is also a need to look at those professional developments that have been named in this study and teachers indicated as beneficial to their more effectively teaching students of African descent.

References

Brown, B. B. (1994). "What Teachers Need To Know about the Black Experience before They Teach? An African American Historical and Cultural Continuum: Selected Research Experiences To Prepare Preservice Teachers To Teach the Black Experience." ERIC: ED375211.

California Commission of Teacher Credentialing. (1997). California Standards for the Teaching Profession. Sacramento: State of California.

Cook, C. J. (1996). "Realizing New Learning for All Students Through Professional Development."Available http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/edcatrs/profdevl/pd200.htm

Darling-Hammond, L. (1990). "Restructuring to Promote Learning in America's Schools." Videoconference #8, The Meaning of Professional Development in the 21st Century. Oakbrook, IL:NCREL.

Irving, J. J. (1990). Black Students and School Failure. New York:Greenwood Press.

Hilliard, A. G. (1997). SBA: Reawakening of the African Mind. Gainesville:Makare Publishing.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

National Center for Education Statistics. Office of Educational Research (1998). Report in Brief: NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress. Available http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/96report/97986f2.shtml.

National Center for Education Statisitcs. Office of Educational Research (1998). 1996 National And State Summary Data Tables [CD-ROM]. From NCES 98-525Washington D. C.: National Center for Education Statistics. Office of Educational Research and Improvement.